

# KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

## Meeting with Knox County Municipalities

**Thursday - October 1, 2009 - 2:30 p.m.**

A meeting of the Knox County Commission with the Knox County municipalities was held on Thursday, October 1, 2009, at 2:30 p.m., at the county courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine. Administrative Assistant Candice Richards was present to record the minutes of the meeting.

Commission members present were: Anne Beebe-Center, Commissioner District #1, Richard L. Parent, Jr., Commissioner District #2, and Roger A. Moody, Commissioner District #3.

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Administrative Assistant Candice Richards, Finance Director Kathy Robinson, and EMA Director Ray Sisk (also as a Hope Selectman).

Other people present: Steve Betts from the *Herald Gazette*; Robert Peabody, Jr., Town Manager of Rockport; Dorothy Meriwether, South Thomaston Selectman; Rosemary Kulow, City Manager of Rockland; John Falla, Town Manager of St. George; Grant Watmough, Town Manager of Warren; John Crabtree, Selectman from Warren; Jay Feyler, Selectman from Union; and Roberta Smith, Town Manager of Camden.

## Meeting with Knox County Municipalities – Agenda

**Thursday – October 1, 2009 – 2:30 p.m.**

## I. Meeting Called to Order

## II. Topics for Discussion

1. Property Assessors
2. Road Engineer
3. Animal Control Committee
4. Solid Waste Committee
5. KWRED Funding
6. Other

### III. Action List

### Items to be researched or followed up for the next meeting

#### **IV. Schedule Next Meeting Date and Place**

## V. Adjourn

## I. Meeting Called to Order

Commission Chair Anne Beebe-Center called the October 1, 2009 meeting to order at 2:35 p.m.

## II. Topics for Discussion

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center stated that the County is not trying to run the programs but wants to talk with the towns collectively and see what might make sense or be cost-effective. Some towns may want to work together in small groups, or work with the County on some projects. The purpose is just to have the discussions.

County Administrator Andrew Hart commented that some municipalities may think that the County wants to take over some of these programs but that is not the case. The County just wants to help facilitate or support the municipalities, unless there is a service that the municipalities want the County to take over.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center commented that the County may just end up being the financial agent for a service that the municipalities all use.

## Property Assessors

County Administrator Andrew Hart commented that the budgets for property assessing in the towns that responded to the survey varied greatly, partly because of the size of each town.

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Assessor or Assessor's Agent</b>	<b>Amount Budgeted for 1 Year</b>	<b>Days per Week Working</b>
South Thomaston	Horace "Bert" Taylor	\$26,928	96 days per year (amounts to about 2 days per week)
Cushing	Garnett Robinson	\$25,570	1 day per week
Rockport	Judy Mathiau	\$57,519 (total dept. cost: \$111,001)	Full-time
Camden	John Doan	\$61,668	Full-time
Hope	Vern Zeigler	\$13,800	32 days per year

St. George	Parker Appraisal Co	\$11,840	Only when needed, a half-time assessing clerk deals with clerical items
Rockland	Dennis Reed	\$147,824 for the department	Full-time
Vinalhaven	Jacqueline Robbins	\$24,906 budgeted, but she is also the CEO and LPI	2 days per week, more if needed
Washington	Stanley Millay	PT \$15/hr up to \$7,000	Part-Time
Appleton	Melanie Ripley	\$6,500	4 hours every Tuesday, one Tuesday evening 2 hrs
Union	James Murphy	\$25,200	72 days per year
Warren	James Murphy	\$29,600 (total dept. cost \$35,800)	2 days per week
Thomaston	David Martucci	\$18,935	2 days per week, one evening per month
Friendship			
Isle Au Haut			
Matinicus			
North Haven			
Owls Head			

Total: \$516,972

Commissioner Roger Moody suggested that some towns could combine efforts to share services. That would be completely voluntary and would be up to the towns whether the County is involved or not.

Bob Peabody commented that when looking at assessors, a couple things need to be taken into consideration. Towns with an Assessor’s Board hire assessor’s agents to work for that board. Towns with no Assessor’s Board hire a single assessor working for the state but paid by the town. He added that if this discussion were to go any further, it would be wise to bring in the Boards of Selectmen from the towns because it may mean sharing power with them. The work load also varies from town to town, and some assessor’s agents or assessors serve multiple functions for their town.

John Falla commented that he believed that the towns are happy with the way things are and that the issue of County-run assessing can be set aside.

Grant Watmough stated that the towns are already doing what Commissioner Moody suggested. Some of the towns are already sharing assessors. He added that he was not sure how to realistically regionalize if the County took over assessing for all the towns. He stated that it would be a traumatic amount of work for the County to handle the entire thing.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center stated that the consensus of the group was to no longer pursue the idea of the County handling assessing services. The municipalities already have this under control.

Road Engineer

Municipality	Interested?
South Thomaston	Yes
Hope	Yes
Rockport	Yes
Rockland	Yes
Vinalhaven	Yes
Washington	Yes
St. George	No
Cushing	No
Thomaston *	No
Warren	No
Union	Depends on the cost
Camden	?
Appleton	?
Friendship	?
Isle Au Haut	?
Matinicus	?
North Haven	?
Owls Head	?

\* Valmore Blastow from Thomaston also commented "the value of an engineer at one's disposal has a direct relationship to at what cost. Typically Thomaston satisfactorily handles most issues based on the knowledge and experience of existing staff. I would only engage an engineer when I am designing or planning a project that has real potential of becoming a reality. Therefore I would say no to paying for an engineer on a contract basis."

Mr. Falla stated that he felt the same way about this topic as he did for the Assessing issue. He felt that the towns were already handling this on their own and did not need help.

Commissioner Richard Parent stated that he disagreed with what Valmore Blastow wrote on his response to the questionnaire. The Town of Warren had hired a road engineer and it had proved to be very useful to the town. If the County could provide this service to the towns, it would be a step forward.

Mr. Watmough commented that the Town of Warren had indeed hired a road engineer and that it had raised the level of their public works. The end product is better than when the town started. He added that the only time a town would need a road engineer is when the cost is over a certain amount because of a state law. Other than road maintenance, the costs are not going to exceed \$100,000 very often.

Commissioner Richard Parent commented that initial discussions on this topic were based on the idea that the County would have an engineer on retainer to serve on a consultant type basis.

Mr. Watmough asked if the towns would be the ones paying for the retainer.

Commissioner Richard Parent replied that when a town uses the service, they would pay for it.

Rosemary Kulow asked what the difference was between the County having an engineer on retainer and the towns contracting with an engineer for specific projects.

Commissioner Richard Parent replied that the towns would not have to go out to bid for services and therefore prevent themselves from being stuck with the lowest bidder who may not provide the best quality of service. If there is someone already on retainer for the County as a whole, a town would not have to wait to get an engineer to come look at a project.

Ms. Kulow commented that if the cost of using the engineer exceeds \$5,000, the City of Rockland would have to go out to bid for the services.

Ray Sisk commented that an RFP could be put out to cover the bid requirement. A lot of towns do not have strong engineering knowledge in the building of roads. It is hard to put a value on having that kind of professional assistance.

Ms. Kulow stated that she agreed that the towns need the advice and assistance but that she wanted to avoid redundancy.

Commissioner Richard Parent replied that the County would not be providing the service, but instead would be providing the ability to use the service.

Commissioner Roger Moody asked if the City of Rockland has an engineer.

Ms. Kulow replied that that Rockland did not, but that the City contracts for services.

Commissioner Roger Moody suggested that maybe the Rockland RFP for engineer services could be used as a template in order to ask the right questions.

Ms. Kulow stated that copies would be available if anyone was interested in looking at them. She added that Rockland does have an engineer's position that has not been filled.

Mr. Peabody commented that when he responded to the questionnaire, he did not notice the word "road". He had just seen the word "engineer", and was therefore thinking in terms of multiple types of construction. This is the reason why he said yes to the engineer question. He added that Rockport could use help with other issues, such as culverts or the lime kilns down by the harbor.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center asked if it would make a difference to the towns if the County was to retain a general engineer, rather than a road engineer.

Ms. Kulow replied that it might.

Mr. Peabody stated that he did not really need help with Rockport roads.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center asked if it would be worth looking at a firm that has a variety of engineering expertise. The County could work out some sort of agreement and get an idea of fees, etc. so the towns would know what they had to work with.

Ms. Kulow stated that it would be worth having the expertise to at least be able to review projects. Sometimes review boards want another engineer to review the work, so this would help with that.

#### **Animal Control Committee**

Mr. Falla stated that the Animal Control Committee had met the previous Thursday and that the Sheriff had attended. The group followed up with towns to see if they were interested in animal control services, and asked the Sheriff what possibilities exist for the Sheriff's Department to be able to provide services. He stated that the Sheriff is willing to look at having a deputy assigned to be on-call and full-time to act as an Animal Control Officer.

Mr. Falla stated that the Committee looked at the budgeted amounts that the towns had submitted for their ACO services. If the County were to provide services to the entire County, the costs would have to be divided by population in the towns interested. It costs too much. Unless more towns change their minds and become interested, there is currently not enough interest to make it worthwhile to change things. He added that towns with no ACO often talk to towns that do have an ACO to see if something can be worked out. The towns are already handling this issue on their own, or in collaboration with other towns.

Mr. Watmough commented that it would depend on what a town's current situation is. He added that Warren is comfortable with their setup right now.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center commented that it may just be a timing issue.

Mr. Sisk stated that it might not be worth pursuing this now, but with the economy it would possibly be worth doing down the road.

Mr. Peabody stated that he would hate to see this topic disappear, but would like to keep it for later consideration.

Mr. Falla stated that Sheriff Dennison had contacted other sheriffs in other counties and learned that no other sheriff's department in Maine is covering ACO services. It is, however, done in other states.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center commented that it sounded like the equipment that the ACO uses can cost a lot.

Ms. Kulow replied that if a town contracts with an ACO that contracts with multiple towns, the ACO would buy their own equipment and use the same equipment for each town. That way, each town does not have to buy their own equipment.

Commissioner Richard Parent asked if the cost analysis included the cost of vehicles.

Mr. Falla replied that vehicles were not included but that it had been suggested that the ACO could use an old Sheriff's Office cruiser.

Ms. Kulow commented that in the rural towns she had worked for in the past, they had just paid the ACO mileage instead of supplying the ACO with a vehicle.

County Administrator Andrew Hart stated that he had met with Sheriff Dennison on another town's issue and this topic came up. It had been discussed that there can be problems or safety concerns with ACO's using their own vehicle.

Mr. Sisk asked if it was known if call volume has an impact on the costs.

Mr. Falla replied that call volume was not factored into the costs. He added that Sheriff Dennison had told him that there would have to be some kind of backup for the ACO in case that person was unavailable.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center stated that it sounded like the topic of consolidating ACO services in the County should be put on hold for now. She added that it could be discussed again in a year.

#### **Solid Waste Committee**

Mr. Peabody explained that the Solid Waste Committee had met and had a discussion about what the purpose of the SW Committee was, and what the Committee should accomplish. He stated that they had concluded that the purpose of the Committee was to act as stewards of the towns and the environment. He added that the meeting had been mostly a brainstorming session and that the topics raised would be discussed in greater detail at their next meeting. He stated that the Committee members talked about possible plans, such as regional hauling solutions, organic wastes, federal

money available to deal with odor issues (i.e.: problem at Mid-Coast Solid Waste), and other funding sources. If a study or planning funds were available for heat recovery, some questions to ask might be: what can be done with that heat? Can you heat buildings and save the taxpayers dollars? The Committee had looked at having a closer relationship with nearby solid waste facilities. They also looked at ways to better capture renewable resources, like the South Portland (Commercial Paving Company). The next meeting for the SW Committee is October 8<sup>th</sup> at 9a.m.

Commissioner Richard Parent asked what the Committee had in mind when thinking about working with the other waste facilities.

Mr. Peabody stated that he and Jim Guerra (Manager of Mid-Coast Solid Waste) had worked on a framework on how “C, D, and D” (construction, demolition, and debris) might work for the Mid-Coast area. A facility was designed but the economics did not work out; however, the framework on how to do it was retained for future use. He added that he had spoken to all sixteen towns of Knox County. Waldoboro is interested but Lincolnville is already part of Mid-Coast Solid Waste anyway.

#### **KWRED Funding**

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center asked if there was an update.

County Administrator Andrew Hart stated that he had attended his first KWRED meeting in Camden a week before. KWRED was affiliated with EMDC but has since dissolved that relationship. KWRED is now trying to reestablish itself and become more involved with the towns of Knox County. The Knox County Commission has had two meetings with Lincoln County, discussed economic development, and will be having the same discussion with Waldo County at a later date. Camden, Belfast, the City of Rockland, and the County of Knox provide the funding for KWRED. At the meeting it was discussed having the County play a bigger role for KWRED, and to possibly provide more funding. In previous County budgets, EMDC was given \$20,000, of which \$15,000 was for KWRED. The County has received a letter from KWRED explaining how the towns will benefit from the work that KWRED does. KWRED wants the County to include more funding for them in the 2010 budget and the money would be distributed throughout the towns. KWRED wants Knox County to give them \$90,000. Funding would come from the towns of Knox County, and independent contracts. The request will go to the Knox County Budget Committee and the Knox County Commission to decide what gets put in the 2010 budget. Administrator Hart stated that he wanted to see how other towns felt about economic development and how they felt about the County taking a larger roll.

Roberta Smith stated that KWRED was created as an arm of EMDC. Because the district was so big, the Knox County area was being left out of the economic development services. KWRED started with the larger towns in Knox and Waldo County, but hoped to work with other towns and to find what will benefit all of the towns in Knox County. It does not make sense for KWRED to go to each individual community for funding and provide separate Economic Development for each community. It makes more sense to do it more on a County level. She added that she would like to see the County include money in the County budget for KWRED rather than go to the individual municipalities for the money.

Commissioner Roger Moody commented that this sounded very complicated in terms of coverage. Lincoln County Commissioners stated that they would like to link up in terms of services because the Mid-Coast Economic Development District (MCEDD) is being taken over by Brunswick; all of the State and Federal resources are going to Brunswick. The head of the MCEDD contacted the Commission chair, Commissioner Beebe-Center, and said that what the Knox County Commission is hearing from Lincoln County Commission is not exactly correct.

Mr. Watmough asked if KWRED and EMDC are in conflict with each other or if they compliment each other.

Ms. Smith responded that the two organizations do compliment each other in some respects. They both are involved in Workforce training. KWRED has a local phone number if a business needs financing for something or needs to get help from the state.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center stated that the County continues to pay EMDC because Knox County is still a part of the district. EMDC is still required to provide the County access to services. It is just a matter of how much the County is going to take on.

Commissioner Richard Parent asked if the \$90,000 was KWRED’s entire budget for 2010 or if it was just how much they are asking for from Knox County.

County Administrator Andrew Hart replied that \$90,000 is how much KWRED is asking for from the County of Knox.

Commissioner Roger Moody asked what the future of KWRED will be.

Ms. Smith replied that some elements are undetermined. The KWRED board is thinking that time is needed to look at all the options. KWRED is about regional economic development, but how the region is defined is not entirely set. It makes sense including Belfast. Waldo County is not as clear-cut as Knox County.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center commented that she had spoken with the Waldo Commission Chair, who is interested in hearing more and seeing if there might be a role in this for Waldo County.

Ms. Smith stated that KWRED does not feel that the door is shut on Waldo County. KWRED will do whatever makes sense for Knox County. A lot has changed in the past five years.

Jay Feyler stated that all these organizations are competing for the same financing and each is spending money on their own directors. It is a waste of money. It would be better to have one organization. Everything is so complicated now with everyone fighting over the same funds.

Mr. Peabody commented that if Knox County is interested in being the Economic Development vehicle, the County should have an Economic Development department funded by the \$90,000 instead of farming it out to another organization.

Ms. Smith replied that part of the concern is that KWRED is to be funded in part by government, but also by the private sector.

Mr. Peabody asked if the local businesses are giving money to KWRED now.

Ms. Smith replied that they have not been asked yet.

Mr. Peabody asked why businesses would want to contribute.

Ms. Smith replied that businesses, such as banks, lumber yards, real estate, etc., would want to see the area grow.

Mr. Peabody stated that a lumber yard is not going to want to see the industry to grow so that another lumber yard pops up and becomes competition. He added that he was not sure what model works the best but that it is a conversation that needs to happen.

Ms. Smith stated that KWRED had started from the perspective that this should be done entirely through the County, but some businesses have shown interest and a list needs to be finalized of businesses that will be asked to contribute. In the past, KWRED had received funding from only Knox County, the Town of Camden, the City of Rockland, and the City of Belfast, but KWRED did provide help to the other towns in Knox County. Economic development organizations are overlapping and fighting over money.

Mr. Peabody commented that Rockport may have received help from KWRED, but no one from KWRED ever came to him or talked to him about economic development in his town. He stated that he is on the EMDC board and that is where he had heard that KWRED was doing something in Rockport.

Ms. Smith stated that KWRED has been struggling to get completely organized but the plan is to get out and talk to the different communities. The change in personnel, when Alan Hinsley left, affected the intention to visit the individual towns.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center stated that Knox County has been asked, by KWRED, to be the financial agent for that organization, as well as come up with additional money.

Mr. Peabody stated that the third issue is whether KWRED this the best vehicle for economic development in this area.

Ms. Smith responded that the County needs to support and economic development. KWRED would like to be KWRED the organization that the towns of Knox County work with since KWRED has already started; however, it is up to the County to decide.

County Administrator Andrew Hart asked what KWRED would do if the County was unable to fund the full request of \$90,000.

Ms. Smith replied that from her perspective, if Knox County does not fund KWRED at the full level requested, then KWRED will have to approach the individual communities and it has not been determined how much might be needed from each community.

County Administrator Andrew Hart commented that if the County is putting up that much money, it needs to benefit all County municipalities.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center agreed that it has to benefit all 16 towns. Economic development is regional, it is not town boundaries. She stated that she thought the County should have a role in economic development, but that she did not know what that should look like.

#### **Ambulance Service**

Commissioner Richard Parent stated that the time has come for a county-wide shared or county-run ambulance service. He stated that the issue concerns the Town of Warren in particular but does concern the whole County. The towns needed to look at what the most economically best way to proceed would be. Each town cannot afford their own services.

Dorothy Meriwether stated that she would love to see the responsibility of ambulance services to go to the County but in South Thomaston, the ambulance service there is beloved by the citizens. The billing is a huge problem for the town and losing vast amounts of money. The per diem system costs \$70,000 a year just to have people waiting around for an emergency to happen.

Mr. Falla commented that the struggle is the volunteer firefighters and ambulance services personnel. The towns want someone responding to emergencies as soon as possible. He suggested having an administrative center that handles billing, etc. and still have the ambulances stationed in several areas to get to the people quickly. There needs to be a first responder system.

Mr. Watmough stated that The Town of Warren is struggling with the issue because their ambulance service is a volunteer crew. Their ability to respond to emergencies is at its limit because they have to respond to the State prison, which adds up to just as many calls as the rest of the town combined. He added that he did not want the volunteer ambulance crews to think that they are not appreciated for what they do.

Commissioner Roger Moody asked Mr. Feyler if the administrative side of the services could be handled by the Camden First Aid Association.

Mr. Feyler replied that Administrator Hart could better answer the question because Administrator Hart was the one who had signed the contract when he was the town manager of Union.

County Administrator Andrew Hart stated that when he was still working for the Town of Union, the billing was something that Union wrestled with a lot. They had looked into contracting with an out-of-state company to do the billing, but the company would take a cut of what was billed, so it was decided to stay with Camden First Aid.

Mr. Feyler commented that one of the problems is waiting to get money from Medicare/Medicaid or health insurance companies. Insurance companies are famous for rejecting claims for really minor mistakes, such as forgetting to put in someone's middle initial in their name.

County Administrator Andrew Hart stated that the Union taxpayers did not mind paying for the \$60,000 in the budget because the service is something they wanted.

Mr. Falla stated that the towns end up paying for increases in taxes. Towns should not have a couple people being paid per diem just to have them sit there doing nothing. He suggested that it might be a good idea to have ambulance stations sitting between areas so they are still close to the communities. The volunteer ambulance services workers do not want to do the paperwork.

Mr. Feyler responded that the volunteers are the ones that have to fill out the paperwork or the town will not be reimbursed.

Ms. Meriwether stated that the problem is that the volunteers are trained to be EMT's but are not trained to use computers. She stated that she would love to see the use of substations but South Thomaston already has an ambulance service, which is at a crisis point. The town will have to tell the volunteer crew to get their act together or the town will have to do something else. The taxpayers will not make the change even though it needs to happen.

Mr. Falla commented that some of this issue needs to also be discussed at the state level. He stated that depending on the type of call, a paramedic does not always need to be the one responding to the call. He added that he did not believe that a solution could be reached at meetings with the County.

Commissioner Richard Parent asked what Mr. Falla recommended that the group do. He asked if the group should just sit and wait.

Mr. Falla replied that the group needs to start with the services that are out there.

Ms. Meriwether stated that she disagreed with part of that. Things will not change until the Selectmen can go to the townspeople with an offer and a plan that is better than what they currently have. If the Selectmen speak to the ambulance service people first, they will go down kicking and screaming.

Mr. Falla commented that the EMS people need to be involved in the discussion and the solution.

Commissioner Roger Moody asked if it would be a good idea for the Commission to invite ambulance service workers to a meeting to discuss the issue further.

Mr. Falla stated that he did not know of any mutual aid EMS organizations, but that there are fire mutual aid organizations.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center suggested finding out if there were other counties with a county ambulance service program.

Commissioner Richard Parent stated that the Town of Warren is at a crisis point and that something needs to be done.

Ms. Meriwether commented that South Thomaston's EMS is focused on saving lives and not saving money or solving billing problems. She stated that she was not sure how they could be engaged in a conversation. She added that it would be good to do that, but that she was not sure it would work. She stated that it would be great if St. George could work with South Thomaston.

Mr. Falla commented that a lot of the current EMS people are getting older and do not want to be responding to calls late at night. He added that there is not a new generation of EMS people taking over.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center commented that it would be useful to discuss these issues with the EMS responders and the towns. The County is thinking it may be able to play a roll by taking on the roll of the functions that the towns are paying people to do, like paperwork, etc.

### **III. Action List**

None stated.

### **IV. Schedule Next Meeting Date and Place**

Thursday November 12<sup>th</sup> at 2:30pm

### **V. Adjourn**

- A motion was made by Commissioner Richard Parent to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Roger Moody. A vote was taken with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 4:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Candice Richards

**The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting  
held on February 9, 2010.**

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Anne H. Beebe-Center, Chair – Commissioner District #1

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Richard L. Parent, Jr. – Commissioner District #2

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Roger A. Moody – Commissioner District #3